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**KYRGYZ REPUBLIC**

# SUCCESS STORY

## Advocacy Eases Burden for Citizens

**A civic advisory group works with local government to solve citizens' problems.**



Karakol residents used to have to walk or take a taxi to get to the bus station that connects the city to the capital and other regions of the country.  
Photo: Urban Institute

*“Advisory group is a unique body uniting all of the city’s public sectors, thus making its work effective”*

-Azat Kurmaev, NGO representative and Advisory Group member.

Karakol residents used to have to walk or take a taxi to get to the bus station that connects the city to the capital and other regions of the country. Few could afford a taxi, so most walked carrying heavy bags with children in tow.

The solution came as a result of public-private dialogue through the Karakol Advisory Group. In 2003, USAID Decentralization and Local Government Program helped the city of Karakol develop a strategic plan with a steering group of civic, business and municipal leaders. These leaders found the partnership experience so successful that they continued their cooperation by forming a permanent Advisory Group to bring citizens' concerns to the attention of the municipal administration and to assist in solving them.

The company running the mini-van public transit service in the city was unwilling to open up new routes from the city center to the bus station. So the Karakol Advisory Group ascertained the most heavily traveled routes from the city center to the bus station and approached another public transit company about servicing these routes. Supported by the Advisory Group, the company was able to obtain the city government's permission quickly, and citizens now have no problem to get to the bus station.

As a rule, the Advisory Group attempts to solve citizens' problems in a systemic and sustainable way. For example, on the initiative of the Advisory Group, the city established a sanitation inspectorate to ensure garbage removal. With donor and private sector funding, the advisory group helped establish a social development bank that provides loans to local small businessmen, and with the proceeds, provides small grants to citizen groups to address their needs.

USAID's Decentralization and Local Government Program helps build such partnerships between local governments and citizens so they can work together to solve problems.